

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 212748

LIMDIS, NICOSIA FOR HOUGHTON AND MACK

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY, LE

SUBJECT: SYRIA-LEBANESE TRAVEL

REF: DAMASCUS 5664 (NOTAL)

1. PRIOR TO LAUNCHING HOUGHTON-MACK VISIT TO CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED LEBANON, WE HAD CONSIDERED SENDING THEM VIA DAMASCUS AND BY ROAD TO JOUNIEH. A LEBANESE MILITARY OFFICER VISITING WASHINGTON AT ABOUT THAT TIME TOLD US THAT, WHILE THE ROAD COULD BE USED, A SECTION NEAR FARAYYA WAS THE SCENE OF FREQUENT SNIPING AND WAS CONSIDERED HIGHLY DANGEROUS FOR THAT REASON. HE PROFESSED TO BE QUITE FAMILIAR WITH SECURITY CONDITIONS ALONG THAT ROUTE.

2. WE ARE INTERESTED IN YOUR REPORT (REFTEL) THAT AIR
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CONDITIONED BUS TRAVEL BETWEEN JOUNIEH AND DAMASCUS IS NOW

POSSIBLE. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR CHECKING INTO THIS MATTER FURTHER, PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE SECURITY PROBLEM. WE MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER HAVING HOUGHTON AND MACK RETURN TO JOUNIEH BY THESE MEANS SO AS TO AVOID THE RIGORS, DELAYS, UNCERTAINTIES AND DISCOMFORTS OF 21 HOUR RPT 21 HOUR BOAT TRIPS FROM LARNACA.

3. PLEASE ALSO INFORM US WHETHER THESE BUSES ARE HEAVILY BOOKED.

4. ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE THAT OUR OFFICERS NOT GO THROUGH DAMASCUS ON THIS OCCASION SINCE THIS COULD GIVE RISE TO SPECULATION ELSEWHERE THAT THE SYRIANS WERE SOMEHOW INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TWO MEN; HOWEVER, WE WANT TO SEE WHAT THE OPTIONS ARE, NOW AND IN THE FUTURE. KISSINGER

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